

VOLUNTEER PARK VMP: Citizen Comments - Email & personal communication (ongoing)

Karen Daubert (Seattle Parks Foundation): concerned about trees by newly-restored lily ponds: needle drop and shading issues.

Ken Brunner (Audubon): My perspective on birds in Volunteer Park is totally colored by the Christmas Bird counts I have done there--I have done almost no birding there at other seasons! The following are just to fill in the list of birds that Cassandra [Trimble] used:

- sharp-shinned hawk (several times, usually around the water tower)
- merlin (several times, usually around the water tower--but never when the sharp-shinned is around)
- glaucous-winged gull (almost always on the reservoir)
- snowy owl (once, about 20 years ago, perched on the roof of the art museum!)
- great horned owl (fairly regular, in the large cedar trees southwest of the conservatory)
- red-breasted sapsucker (a couple of times; once, about 15 years ago, there were 11 in the park!)
- downy woodpecker (nearly always)
- Steller's jay (regular)
- kinglets (both species, almost always)
- hermit thrush (several occasions, always in the low shrubbery adjacent to 15th St.)
- cedar waxwing (only once--a flock of about 12 in a berry bush right at the entrance off of 15th)
- brown creeper (nearly every year, in the trees around the reservoir)

So the park does support a fair number of wintering species, despite the general lack of understory vegetation. Most of these species are found in trees, not surprisingly. But the hermit thrush is worth noting, as are wrens in sparrows, that indicate there is SOME understory veg (almost all of it around the borders of the park; there is a little bit around the water tower and the southeast corner of the reservoir, that almost always has winter and Bewick's wrens.) The odd sightings (like snowy owl and red-breasted sapsucker) probably aren't worth noting as habitat indicators (but fun sightings nonetheless!).

Joseph Ferder: Loves chaste tree (*Vitex agnes-castus*) near SE corner of park, glad one has been planted nearby but needs to be moved to more open spot; would like to see a whole allee of them in park for exquisite blue flowers and fragrance. Put off-leash area in one of tennis courts, adding soil. This would allow more enforcement of leash law in park and result in cleaner, safer, less contaminated grass which will be more sanitary for people to lie on and children to play on. Get rugby players to stop destroying grass in area SE of Conservatory. Eliminate commemorative plaque on concrete base recently placed in bed by 14th Avenue entry – very obtrusive; ditto bench plaques. Trim hedge fronting benches on west side of Concourse across from SAAM, or replace with backless benches so people can look at museum instead of wall of green. Minimize amount of concrete in park, in favor of grass, trees, flowers. “Black Sun is placed where the flowers and grass were in the beginning and to preserve the soul of Olmsted heritage it

will be proper to remove the concrete platform and move the 'Black Sun' ...closer to the Asian Museum." If reservoir is to be lidded, replace with grassy area people can use, and remove chainlink fence rather than making shallow reflecting pool and keeping fence.

Duane Spofford: 15th Avenue border badly needs attention, looks neglected and harbors illicit activity. Area around wading pool has no sprinklers; when installing automatic irrigation, Parks ran out of funding and stopped system at road. Trees around wading pool got very dry and stressed this summer, not sure if they were ever watered (requires hand watering with hose). Path up from tennis courts is very overgrown and dark – unsafe footing, dangerous, long-neglected. Need to prune, rake leaves, re-gravel path and add lighting. Leaf drop & big tree shade causes problems for tennis courts. Recent plant removal along perimeter of service yard should have waited till VMP's done – people are surprised and it's really ugly – poor internal coordination & public relations.

Federal Avenue neighbor: Level of illicit sexual activity in park is incredible and has escalated, not declined. Police seem complicit with its continuing, unresponsive to neighbors and legitimate park users. Loop road should be closed, at least at night. Sex and drug activity damages vegetation, scares legitimate users away (especially families), and disturbs wildlife and attracts rats. Domestic animals roaming off-leash (dogs and cats) both disturb and destroy wildlife, especially birds. The vista from the west edge of the reservoir was fabulous in the 1950's and 1960's, and popular benches used to line the top of the slope there. The lost view should be restored; would attract more positive use.